MARVEL
ANNUAL
1
THE SECRET INVASION
AVENGERS
THE INITIATIVE
MVP
RATED T+
00111
DIRECT EDITION
$3.99 US $4.05 CAN

FIFTY STATE INITIATIVE

Dan Slott with Christos Gage - Writers

"SECOND BEST"
Salvador Larroca - Artist
Stephane Peru - Color Art

"REASON FOR BEING"
Clayton Henry - Penciler
Paul Neary - Inker
Daniele Rudoni - Colorist

"BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE"
Steve Uy - Artist

"BORN TO SERVE"
Tom Feister & Carmine Di Giandomenico - Artists
Jose Villarrubia - Color Art

"STATE OF READINESS"
Patrick Scherberger - Penciler
David Meikis - Inker
Wil Quintana - Colorist

VC's Joe Caramagna - Letterer

Molly Lazer - Assistant Editor
Tom Brevoort - Editor
Joe Quesada - Editor in Chief
Dan Buckley - Publisher

THE LIBERTEENS

GAUNTLET
SGT. JOSEPH GREEN

AVENGERS: THE INITIATIVE ANNUAL No. 1, January, 2008. Published as a One-Shot by MARVEL PUBLISHING, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016. © 2007 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive names and likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. $3.99 per copy in the U.S. and $4.05 in Canada (GST #R127032852) in the direct market and $3.99 per copy in the U.S. and $5.75 in Canada (GST #R127032852) through the newsstand; Canadian Agreement #40668537. Canadian Agreement #40668537. **Printed in the USA.** ALAN FINE, CEO Marvel Toys & Publishing Divisions and CMO Marvel Entertainment, Inc.; DAVID GABRIEL, Senior VP of Publishing Sales & Circulation; DAVID BOGART, VP of Business Affairs & Editorial Operations; MICHAEL PASCIULLO, VP Merchandising & Communications; JIM BOYLE, VP of Publishing Operations; DAN CARR, Executive Director of Publishing Technology; JUSTIN F. GABRIE, Managing Editor; SUSAN CRESPI, Production Manager; STAN LEE, Chairman Emeritus. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Mitch Dane, Advertising Director, at mdane@marvel.com. For Marvel subscription inquiries, please call 800-217-9158.

ARMORY
VIOLET LIGHTNER

MVP
MICHAEL VAN PATRICK

HARDBALL
ROGER BROKERIDGE

"WE'RE STILL NOT SURE WHERE THEY CAME FROM.
"JUST THAT TWO ENERGY SOURCES OF INCALCULABLE POWER SUDDENLY APPEARED ABOVE OUR PLANET...
"...COLLIDED WITH ONE ANOTHER...
"...AND BROKE APART.
"AS THEY FELL INTO THE ATMOSPHERE, THE FRAGMENTS WERE THROWN IN MULTIPLE DIRECTIONS, TOWARD DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE GLOBE.
"OUR SATELLITES TRACKED THEM AS BEST THEY COULD...
THE GAUNTLET IN
"SECOND BEST"

...BUT LOST MOST OF THEM. WE WERE ONLY ABLE TO FOLLOW THE MOST POWERFUL ENERGY SIGNATURE.
IT LANDED IN THE SUDAN--HARSH, DESERT TERRAIN.
The Pentagon. Washington, D.C.
I DON'T REMEMBER HEARING ABOUT ANY OF THIS, SECRETARY GYRICH.
IT WAS YEARS AGO, CONGRESSMAN--BEFORE YOU JOINED THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE. AND IT WAS CLASSIFIED TOP SECRET.
UNFORTUNATELY, WE WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES WHO DETECTED THE FALLING DEBRIS. WE PICKED UP ANOTHER SIGNAL HOMING IN ON THE OBJECT--A HYDRA SIGNAL.
ANYTHING THAT POWERFUL, IN THE HANDS OF TERRORISTS... WELL, NEEDLESS TO SAY, WE COULDN'T LET THAT HAPPEN.
FORTUNATELY, ONE OF THE U.S. MILITARY'S MOST HIGHLY DECORATED NON-COMS WAS IN THE AREA--SGT. JOSEPH GREEN.
"HE WAS TASKED WITH THE OBJECT'S RETRIEVAL."
PICK IT UP! STOP DRIVING LIKE MY GRANDMA!
IF THIS SANDSTORM COVERS UP OUR TARGET BEFORE WE GET THERE, DYING IN A CRASH'LL BE THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES!

LOOK OUT! UP AHEAD!
INCOMING!
WHOOM
HAIL HYDRA!
KEEP POURING IT ON! KEEP THEM AWAY FROM THE TARGET ZONE! THERE'S NO PRIZE FOR SECOND BEST, YOU HEAR ME?
SARGE, THE PAIN...I CAN'T STAND ANY MORE...
TELL MY WIFE I--
DID YOU HEAR ME GIVE YOU PERMISSION TO DIE, SOLDIER? I HAVE NEVER LOST A MAN, AND I'LL BE DAMNED IF I'M ABOUT TO START TODAY!
YOU CAN STILL FIRE A WEAPON. AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT YOU'RE GONNA DO.
COVER ME! YOU DIE ON ME NOW...
...AND YOU'LL BE TAKING ME WITH YOU!
BRATTATTA

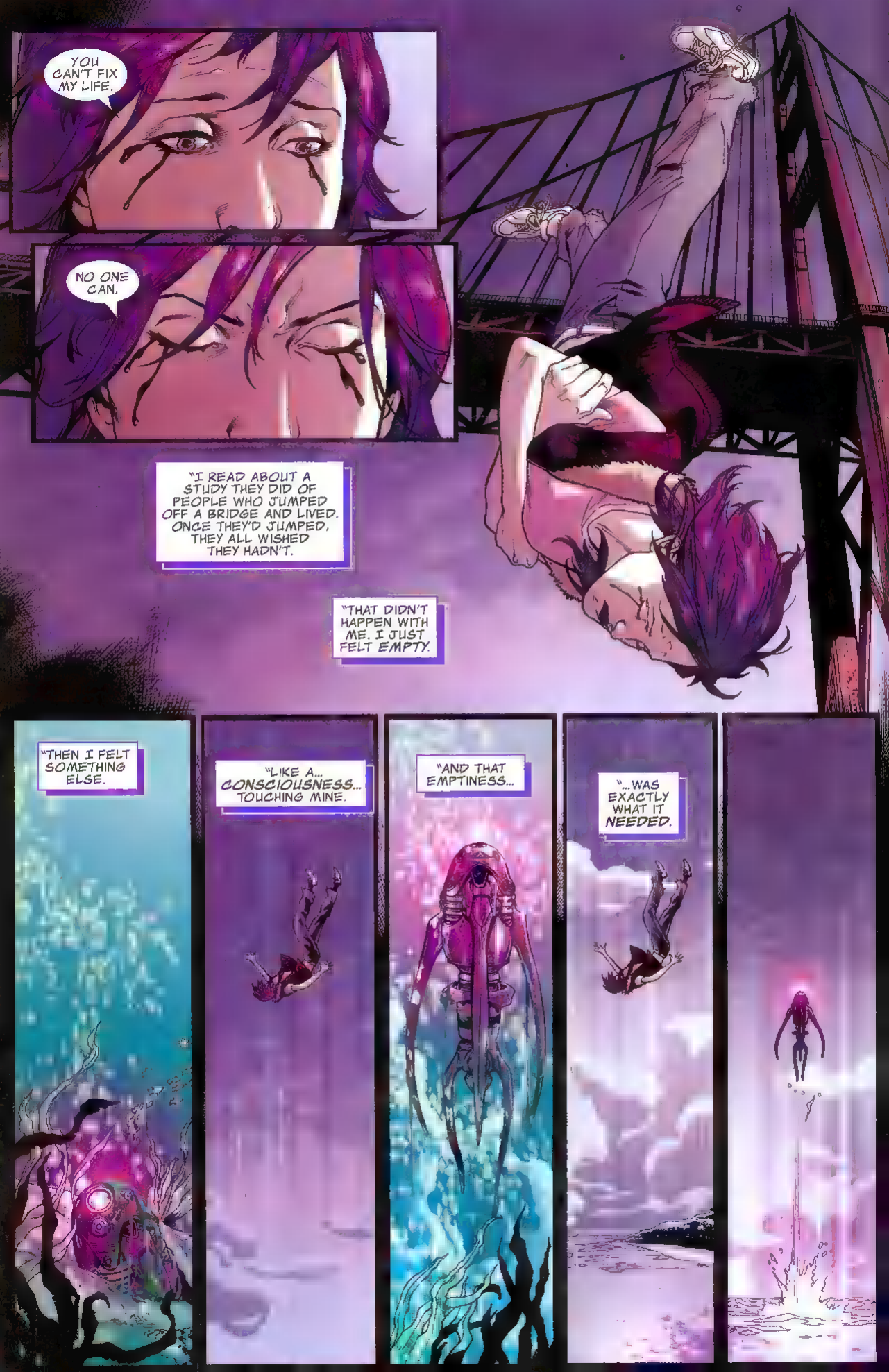
THERE THEY ARE... TWO OF 'EM. SANDSTORM HASN'T COVERED 'EM OVER YET. AND I'M THE FIRST...
...HELL.
CLICK CLICK
GOTCHA YOU MOTHER-LOVIN'--
#$%&! TOO MUCH SAND! MY GUN'S--
CLICK CLICK
CLICK CLICK
--JAMMED. HA. YOU TOO.
SO?
WHAT NOW?

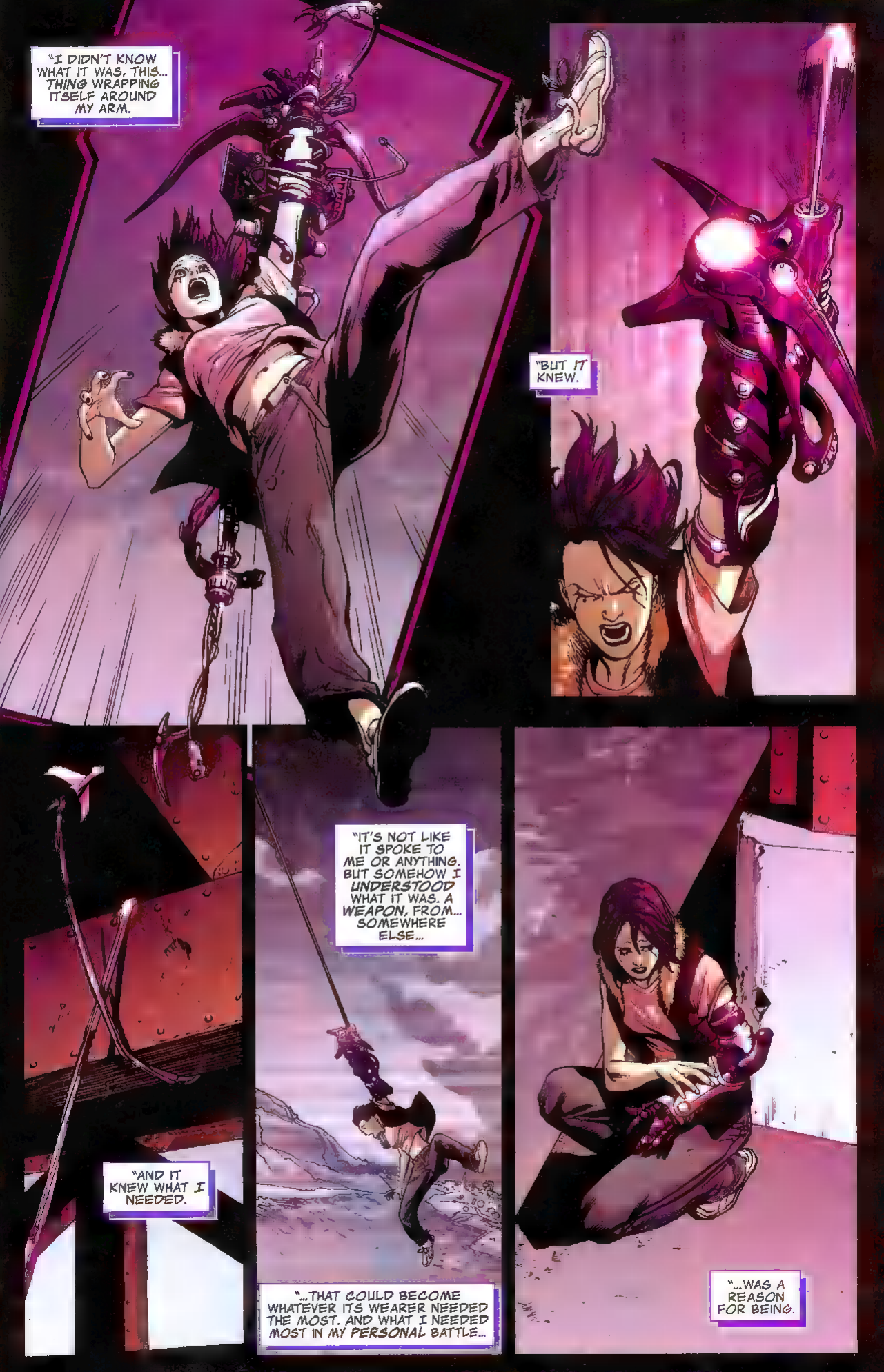
GRRAH!
HNNGH!
KRAK
UTT!
HA! THE PRIZE IS MINE!
IT'S-- IT'S--
TOO HEAVY? HERE...

...LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND!
WHAM!!!
CRAZY GLOVE-THING SAVED MY BUTT. AIN'T WHAT I CAME FOR, THOUGH; THE BIG ONE'S THE REAL POWER SOURCE. SO I'LL JUST TAKE THIS...
...WON'T...COME OFF--? NO! THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY! GOTTA BE SOME WAY TO GET THIS DAMN...THING--
--OFF!!
SUCK IT UP, GREEN. WHAT'D YOU TELL YOUR MEN? THERE'S NO PRIZE FOR SECOND BEST?
GUESS I WAS WRONG. SOMETIMES THERE IS.
SOMETIMES YOU CARRY IT WITH YOU FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.
GREEN RETRIEVED THEM BOTH...BUT THE GLOVE-DEVICE WAS PERMANENTLY BONDED TO HIS NERVOUS SYSTEM. WE COULDN'T FIND A WAY TO REMOVE IT.
NOT THAT WE HAD REASON TO. AS THE GAUNTLET, GREEN'S BEEN AN EVEN GREATER ASSET TO US THAN HE WAS BEFORE.
UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN, MR. GYRICH, HE'S NOT MUCH OF AN ASSET NOW.

HE'S IN A COMA. WITH NO ASSURANCE OF WHEN--OR IF--HE'LL COME OUT OF IT.
CAN WE REALLY AFFORD TO KEEP ONE OF OUR GREATEST WEAPONS INACTIVE? PERHAPS WE SHOULD CONSIDER MORE... DRASTIC METHODS OF REMOVAL.
AMPUTATION COULD JUST CRIPPLE ONE OF OUR BEST MEN...AND RENDER THE DEVICE USELESS.
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SUBJECT IN OUR NEXT FILE, ARMORY. SHE HAD AN ALIEN DEVICE GRAFTED TO HER ARM AS WELL.
AND SINCE WE SURGICALLY REMOVED IT, WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO MAKE THE DAMN THING WORK. IT MIGHT JUST BE THAT THESE THINGS BOND WITH THEIR ORIGINAL HOSTS.
THEN SGT. GREEN'S CONDITION IS MOST UNFORTUNATE. HOW EXACTLY DID THAT HAPPEN, MR. GYRICH?
THAT'S...NOT IMPORTANT FOR OUR PURPOSES, CONGRESSMAN WOODMAN. AND THIS BRIEFING IS ALREADY KEEPING ME FROM MORE URGENT MATTERS. WE SHOULD MOVE ON TO THE NEXT FILE.
BY ALL MEANS, MR. SECRETARY, DO CONTINUE.
YOU'RE DOING AN EXCELLENT JOB. I'M REALLY BEGINNING TO SEE THE BIG PICTURE...
...AND CONNECT ALL THE DOTS.
The End

...TELLING YOU, DR. BURKE, EVERYTHING'S *FINE*. I FEEL GREAT. IT'S LIKE I'M A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON THAN WHEN I WAS HERE BEFORE.
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT, VIOLET. AND I BELIEVE EVERYTHING *WILL* BE FINE. BUT ONE DOESN'T GO THROUGH WHAT YOU DID...
The Burke Wellness Center.
San Francisco, California.
...WITHOUT IT LEAVING *SCARS*.
HAVE YOU BEEN *CUTTING* YOURSELF AGAIN, VIOLET? DO YOU STILL FEEL THE DEPRESSION... THE URGES TO *HURT* YOURSELF? WE CAN PUT YOU BACK ON MEDICATION--
I DIDN'T DO THAT TO MYSELF, DOCTOR. SOMEONE *ELSE* DID THAT TO ME.
"IT WASN'T LIKE BEFORE."
DON'T DO IT, KID. COME ON DOWN. WHATEVER'S WRONG, WE CAN FIX IT.
ARMORY IN
"REASON FOR BEING"


YOU CAN'T FIX MY LIFE.
NO ONE CAN.
"I READ ABOUT A STUDY THEY DID OF PEOPLE WHO JUMPED OFF A BRIDGE AND LIVED. ONCE THEY'D JUMPED, THEY ALL WISHED THEY HADN'T.
"THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN WITH ME. I JUST FELT EMPTY.
"THEN I FELT SOMETHING ELSE.
"LIKE A... CONSCIOUSNESS... TOUCHING MINE.
"AND THAT EMPTINESS...
"...WAS EXACTLY WHAT IT NEEDED.


"I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS, THIS... *THING* WRAPPING ITSELF AROUND MY ARM.
"BUT *IT* KNEW.
"AND IT KNEW WHAT *I* NEEDED.
"IT'S NOT LIKE IT SPOKE TO ME OR ANYTHING. BUT SOMEHOW I *UNDERSTOOD* WHAT IT WAS. A *WEAPON*, FROM... SOMEWHERE ELSE...
"...THAT COULD BECOME WHATEVER ITS WEARER NEEDED THE MOST. AND WHAT I NEEDED MOST IN MY *PERSONAL* BATTLE...
"...WAS A REASON FOR BEING.

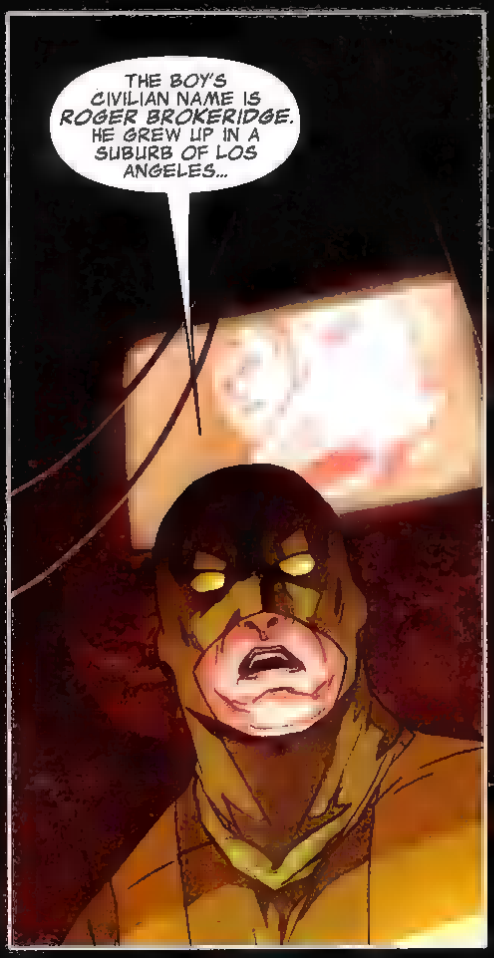
"I GOT ONE.
"HELPING PEOPLE...
"...TAKING ON BULLIES EVERYONE ELSE WAS AFRAID OF...
"...SHOWING PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE ALL ALONE THAT SOMEONE CARED ABOUT THEM.
"IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I MATTERED.
"AND WHEN IRON MAN STARTED THE INITIATIVE...
"...I SAW THE CHANCE TO MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE.
THANK YOU.
REGISTER: IT'S THE LAW

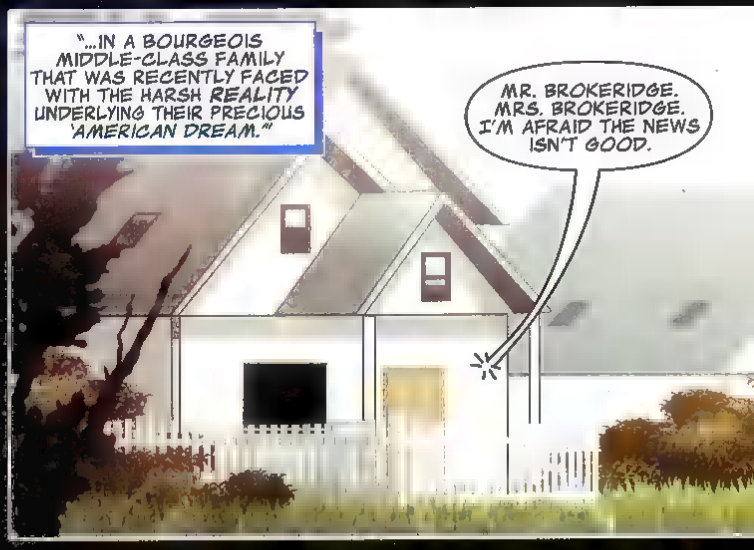
"WHAT HAPPENED NEXT SEEMED LIKE FATE."
ON YOUR TOES, PEOPLE. ULTIMO'S GOT SOME SERIOUS FIREPOWER, AND THAT METAL HIDE OF HIS IS VIRTUALLY...
...INDESTRUCTIBLE.
CHOOOM
WHAT ■ HADES? WONDER MAN DID YOU...?
DON'T LOOK AT ME, ARES, I DIDN'T DO A THING.
YEAH, THAT'D BE ME.
THE NAME'S ARMORY.
SO, MIGHTY AVENGERS, HUH? WHERE DO I SIGN UP?

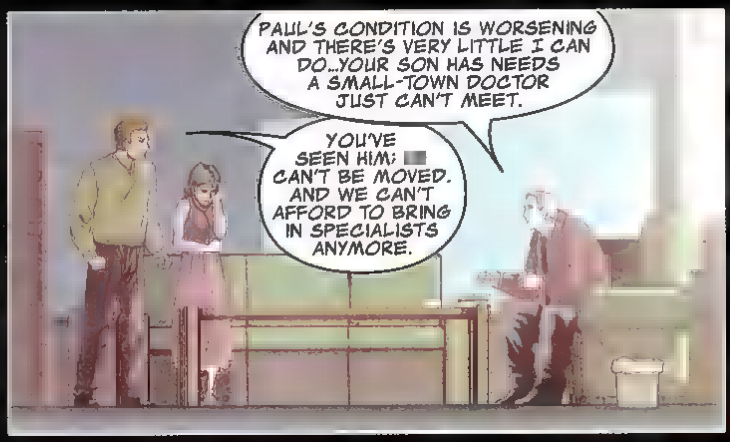
I REMEMBER THE AVENGERS FIGHTING THAT ROBOT, BUT NO MENTION OF YOU. WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
WELL, THAT'S THE KICKER, DOC. I CAN'T REALLY TELL YOU.
THEY SENT ME TO CAMP HAMMOND, THE BOOT CAMP FOR HEROES IN TRAINING. ALONG WITH OTHERS LIKE TRAUMA, KOMODO, CLOUD NINE AND HARDBALL.
BUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS THERE IS CLASSIFIED.
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? THEY... TRAINED ME. AND I WAS DOING GREAT...
...NOTHING COULD STOP ME.
YOU WERE DOING GREAT, AND THEN? DID SOMETHING GO WRONG?
MEH. TRY EVERYTHING.
TRAUMA, WHOSE POWER IS TO BECOME WHATEVER SCARES YOU MOST, TURNED INTO A GIANT SPIDER.
I'VE BEEN TERRIFIED OF SPIDERS EVER SINCE THAT FILTHY FOSTER HOME WHERE THEY'D CRAWL ALL OVER ME EVERY NIGHT.
NOTHING HAPPENED, DOCTOR.
VIOLET, YOU HAVE TO OPEN UP. YOU CAN TELL ME ANYTHING. IT'S ALL CONFIDENTIAL; NO ONE ELSE WILL EVER KNOW.
WHATEVER HAPPENED-- WHATEVER YOU MIGHT HAVE DONE-- WE CAN WORK THROUGH IT.
MVP
...I TOLD YOU. NOTHING HAPPENED.
"NOTHING AT ALL."

LOOK, YOU GOT ME. I MADE IT ALL UP. THE OUTER SPACE GIZMO, THE AVENGERS. EVERYTHING.
I GOT THESE SCRATCHES...GETTING A CAT OUT OF A TREE.
SO? WE DONE HERE OR WHAT?
I'M SORRY, VIOLET, BUT YOU DON'T LEAVE ME MUCH CHOICE. YOU WON'T BE HONEST WITH ME, AND I'M CONCERNED YOU MAY BE A DANGER TO YOURSELF.
I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DENY YOUR OUTPATIENT STATUS, READMIT YOU, AND KEEP YOU UNDER SURVEILLANCE.
IF YOU DECIDE YOU'RE READY TO TELL ME WHAT *REALLY* HAPPENED, I'LL BE RIGHT HERE.
REMEMBER, YOU CAN COUNT ON DOCTOR/PATIENT CONFIDENTIALITY. THERE'S NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF.
WHATEVER.
SECRETARY GYRICH? IT'S DOCTOR BURKE. I'VE JUST FINISHED MY SESSION WITH VIOLET.
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. WHATEVER OTHER PROBLEMS SHE MIGHT HAVE... THE GIRL CAN KEEP A SECRET.
The End

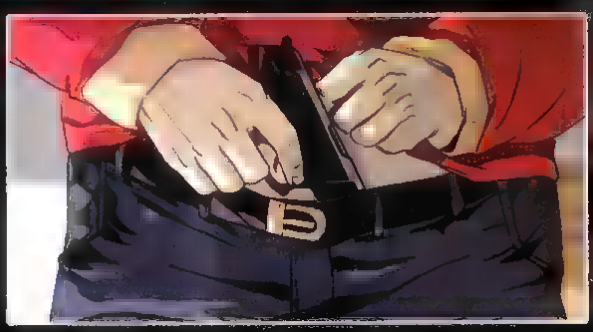
The Healing Hand
New Age Shop.
Washington, D.C.
CONGRESSMAN. GOT SOME NEW CRYSTALS IN THAT CAN HELP ADJUST YOUR CHAKRAS.
IT'S ME, IDIOT, AND I'M LATE. JUST OPEN IT.
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, SIR.
SIGH. TODAY'S PASSWORD IS "DRESDEN."
HAVE A NICE DAY, MR. WOODMAN.
VVVMM
HAIL HYDRA! IMMORTAL HYDRA! CUT OFF A LIMB AND TWO MORE SHALL TAKE ITS PLACE!
COMMANDER WOODMAN, HYDRA COMMANDERS FROM THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY HAVE COME TO HEAR YOUR REPORT.
TELL US ALL WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HARDBALL.


THE BOY'S CIVILIAN NAME IS ROGER BROKERIDGE. HE GREW UP IN A SUBURB OF LOS ANGELES...

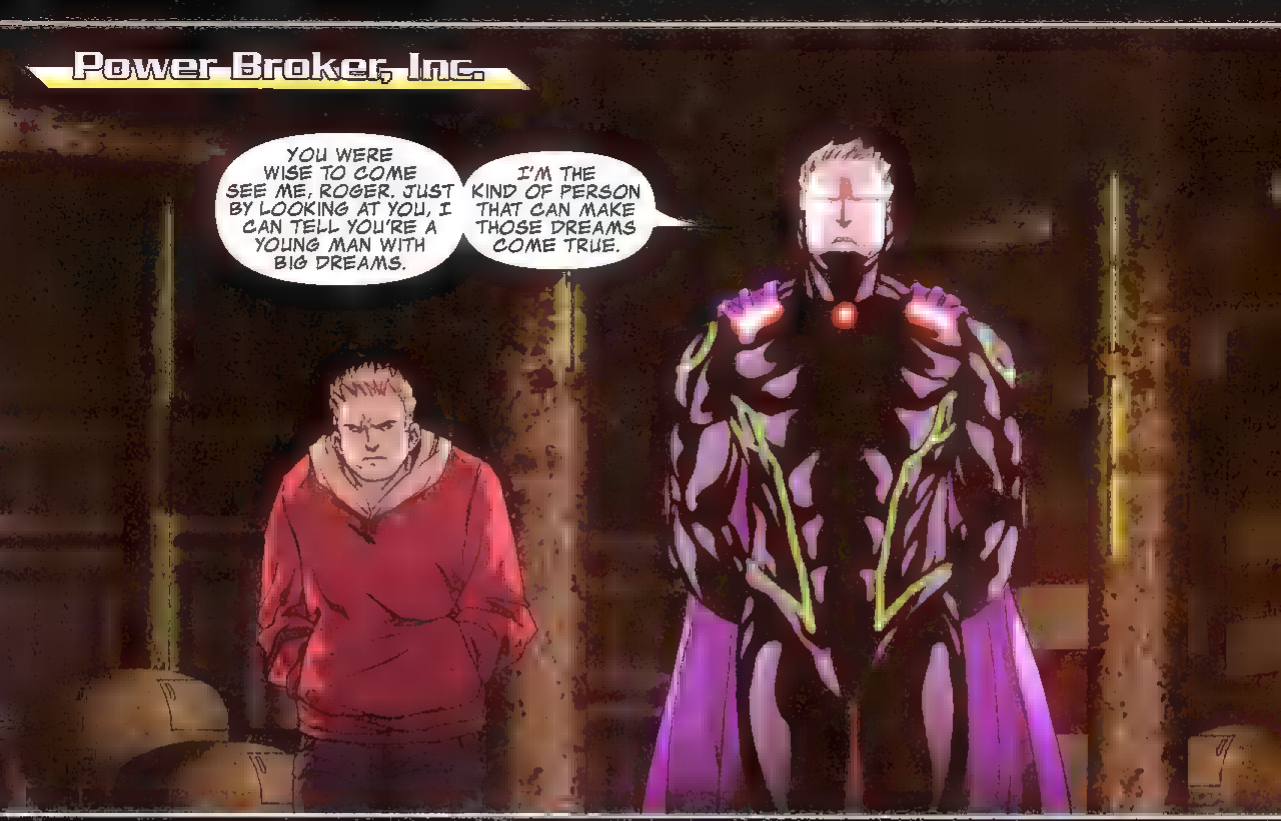

"...IN A BOURGEOIS MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILY THAT WAS RECENTLY FACED WITH THE HARSH REALITY UNDERLYING THEIR PRECIOUS 'AMERICAN DREAM.'"
MR. BROKERIDGE. MRS. BROKERIDGE. I'M AFRAID THE NEWS ISN'T GOOD.


PAUL'S CONDITION IS WORSENING AND THERE'S VERY LITTLE I CAN DO...YOUR SON HAS NEEDS A SMALL-TOWN DOCTOR JUST CAN'T MEET.
YOU'VE SEEN HIM: [redacted] CAN'T BE MOVED. AND WE CAN'T AFFORD TO BRING IN SPECIALISTS ANYMORE.

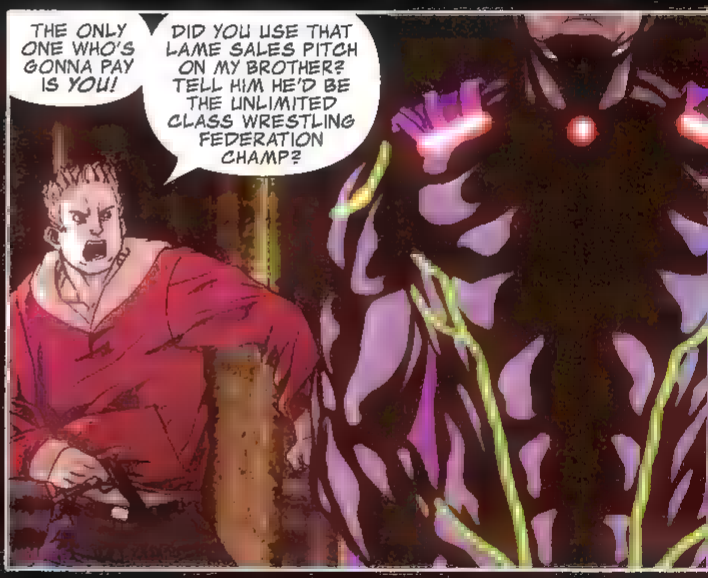
I'M SORRY. I WISH I HAD AN ANSWER FOR YOU...BUT I'M NOT SURE THERE IS ONE.



CH-CHK
RUH... ROGER?
I'M GONNA DO IT, PAUL. THIS TIME I'M GONNA... I...
AW, HELL, PAUL... I'M NOT SURE I CAN.
'S OKAY, BRO. BULLET... PROLLY WOULDN' WORK... ANYHOW.
'M SORRY, ROG. SO... SORRY.
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING, PAUL? BEING A REGULAR WRESTLER ON STEROIDS WASN'T BAD ENOUGH? YOU HAD TO JOIN THAT LEAGUE FOR SUPER-FREAKS?
I SWEAR, IF I EVER FOUND THAT GUY WHO GAVE YOU YOUR POWERS, I'D--
KRESH
THE POWER BROKER...
ROG, NO! C'M BACK!
ROGER!!


YOU WERE WISE TO COME SEE ME, ROGER. JUST BY LOOKING AT YOU, I CAN TELL YOU'RE A YOUNG MAN WITH BIG DREAMS.
I'M THE KIND OF PERSON THAT CAN MAKE THOSE DREAMS COME TRUE.

BUT BE WARNED... TRUE POWER ALWAYS COMES WITH A PRICE.
ARE YOU PREPARED TO *PAY* THAT PRICE, ROGER?


THE ONLY ONE WHO'S GONNA PAY IS *YOU!*
DID YOU USE THAT LAME SALES PITCH ON MY BROTHER? TELL HIM HE'D BE THE UNLIMITED CLASS WRESTLING FEDERATION CHAMP?

YOU MADE HIM THINK HE WAS UNBEATABLE! YOU NEVER TOLD HIM YOU'D MAKE *OTHER* GUYS EVEN *STRONGER* THAN HIM!
ONE BAD MATCH AND NOW HE'S CRIPPLED FOR LIFE! MY FAMILY'S GONNA LOSE *EVERYTHING!* WELL, GUESS WHAT, BIG SHOT--*SO ARE YOU!*

HEH. WRONG.

WHAT? YOU THINK WHEN I BECAME THE NEW POWER BROKER, I'D GIVE POWERS TO OTHERS AND NOT MYSELF?
DON'T BE SO NAÏVE, ROGER. I HAVE MORE POWER THAN YOU COULD EVER IMAGINE.
WHAT YOU DON'T REALIZE IS THAT YOU DO, TOO.
YOU HAVE THE GREATEST POWER OF ALL, ROGER-- DESPERATION. WHEN SOMEONE HAS NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE...THEY'RE CAPABLE OF ANYTHING.
IMAGINE SOMEONE LIKE THAT BEING GIVEN TRUE POWER. WHO KNOWS WHAT THEY COULD ACCOMPLISH?
I COULD GIVE YOU THAT POWER. ENOUGH TO GET YOUR FAMILY ALL THE MONEY THEY'D EVER NEED. TO GIVE YOU THE LIFE YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED.
BUT AS I SAID...IT COMES WITH A PRICE.
MY...MY SOUL?
HAH! NO, ROGER. SOMETHING FAR MORE USEFUL THAN THAT.
SEVENTY PERCENT. WHATEVER FEES YOU'RE PAID, WHATEVER GOODS YOU STEAL, WHATEVER CONS YOU PULL... I GET SEVENTY PERCENT.
SO...DO WE HAVE A DEAL?

"BUT THE PAIN WILL FADE... AND THE POWER WILL REMAIN."
OKAY... FIRST TIME FOR EVERYTHING. IT'S NATURAL TO BE NERVOUS. BUT YOU'VE BEEN CASING THIS ROUTE FOR WEEKS.
NOTHING TO [redacted] SCARED OF. YOU'RE READY. IT'S THE WORLD THAT ISN'T READY...
...FOR HARDBALL!

OH YEAH... WHAT A RUSH! WITH THIS POWER, AN ARMORED CAR'S LIKE A TIN CAN TO--
HUH?
WHA-KOOM
UH...YOU OKAY, KID?
HEY, NICE GOIN', PAL! NO WAY I COULDA STOPPED IN TIME.
SUSIE! OH, THANK THE LORD...
...AND THANK YOU, SIR. I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, BUT YOU'RE A HERO.
I CONCUR, FRIEND. AND I OWE YOU ONE, FOR STEPPING IN WHEN I WAS TOO FAR AWAY.
ARE YOU CLAIRVOYANT, TOO? OR IS IT JUST THE ENERGY POWERS?
UH, JUST THE ENERGY, MR. WONDER MAN, SIR.
CALL ME SIMON. THEN HOW DID YOU KNOW--?
I'M HARDBALL. AND I GUESS I WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME.
IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE. TELL ME, HARDBALL, ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE INITIATIVE?

OF COURSE WITH THE BOY DEEPLY ENTRENCHED IN AN AVENGERS TRAINING COMPLEX, THE POWER BROKER SAW VERY FEW WAYS TO MAKE AN OVERT PROFIT OFF OF HIM.
SO HE SOLD HARDBALL'S CONTRACT TO US.

USING IT AS LEVERAGE, IT WAS A SIMPLE MATTER TO MAKE THE BOY OUR PUPPET. HE'S ALREADY DONE ONE JOB FOR US. AND HE'S GETTING IN DEEPER.
THAT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD, BUT INEVITABLY HIS DOUBLE AGENT STATUS WILL BE COMPROMISED. WHAT THEN?

HARDBALL IN "BE ALL THAT YOU CAN BE"

MEMO
FROM: Baron Wernher [redacted] Blitzschlag
TO: Secretary Henry P. Gyrich
Personal and Confidential
Herr Gyrich: Per your request, I [redacted] compiling what I have learned about Michael [redacted] Patrick, code-named MVP.
Today.
Baron Von Blitzschlag's Quarters.
As you know, the majority of my life has been spent in pursuit of creating der übermensch--what you Americans call "the super-soldier."
After Mr. Van Patrick's unfortunate accident, I finally found myself with the opportunity to dissect one. To my surprise, I found...nothing.
For years I labored for the Reich to create übermenschen such as Master Man, Warrior [redacted] and Yunder Knight.
To my shame, [redacted] of them held a candle to your country's Kapitan Amerika...
... or, for that matter, the genetic potential of this young [redacted]n.
And I had no idea why. Why the family of this ordinary American boy should have succeeded where my genius failed.
Fortunately, in this age of marvels, one need not be a h[redacted] to lay an egg.
MVP IN
"BORN TO SERVE"

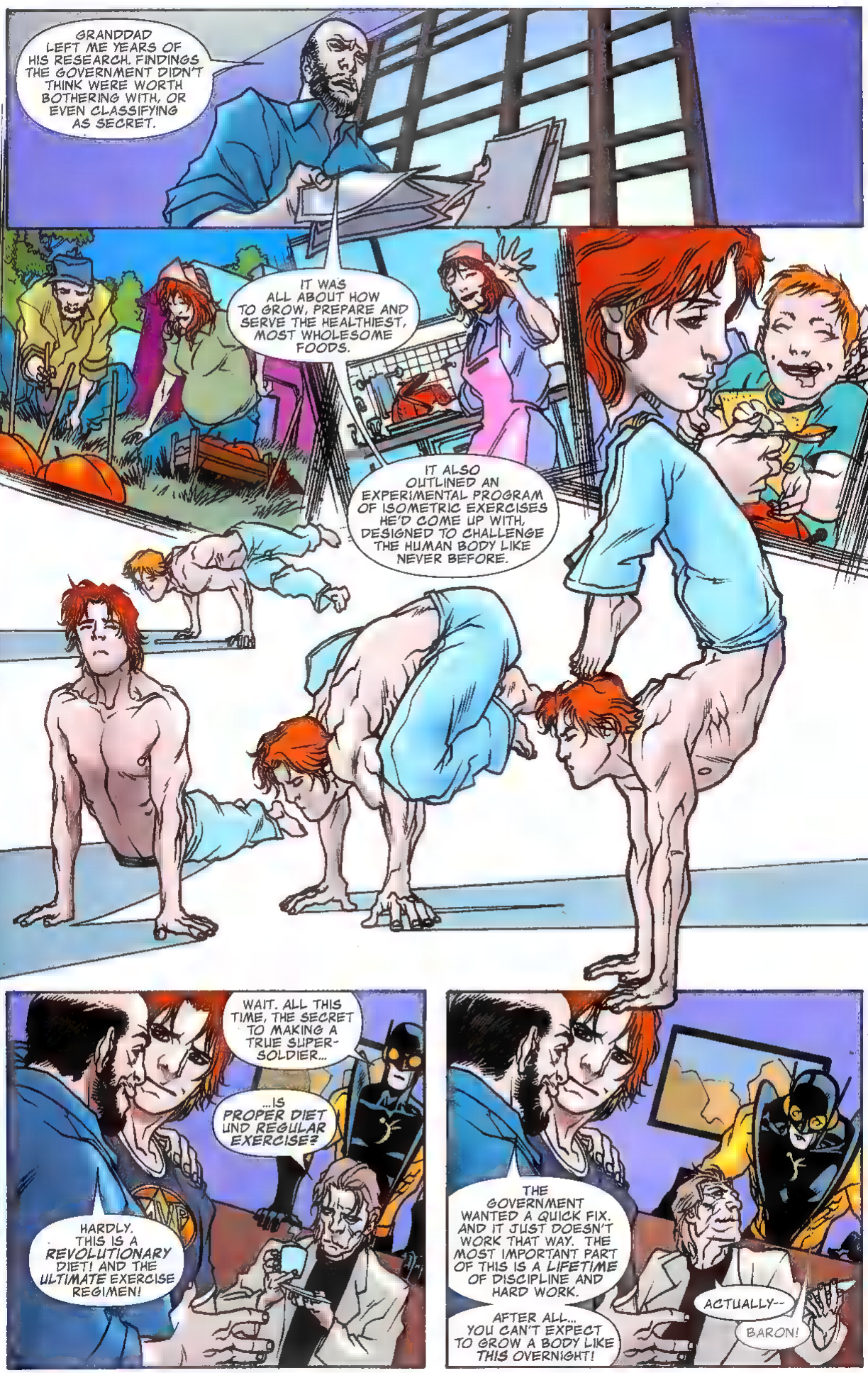
HUHH... HUH---
HERE, SON. WE CAN'T HAVE YOU WALKING AROUND LIKE THAT.
--WHO AM I?
YOU, MY DEAR BOY...ARE HIM.
EXIT
THAT'S... ME. MICHAEL VAN PATRICK. MVP.
I REMEMBER THAT...BUT HOW?

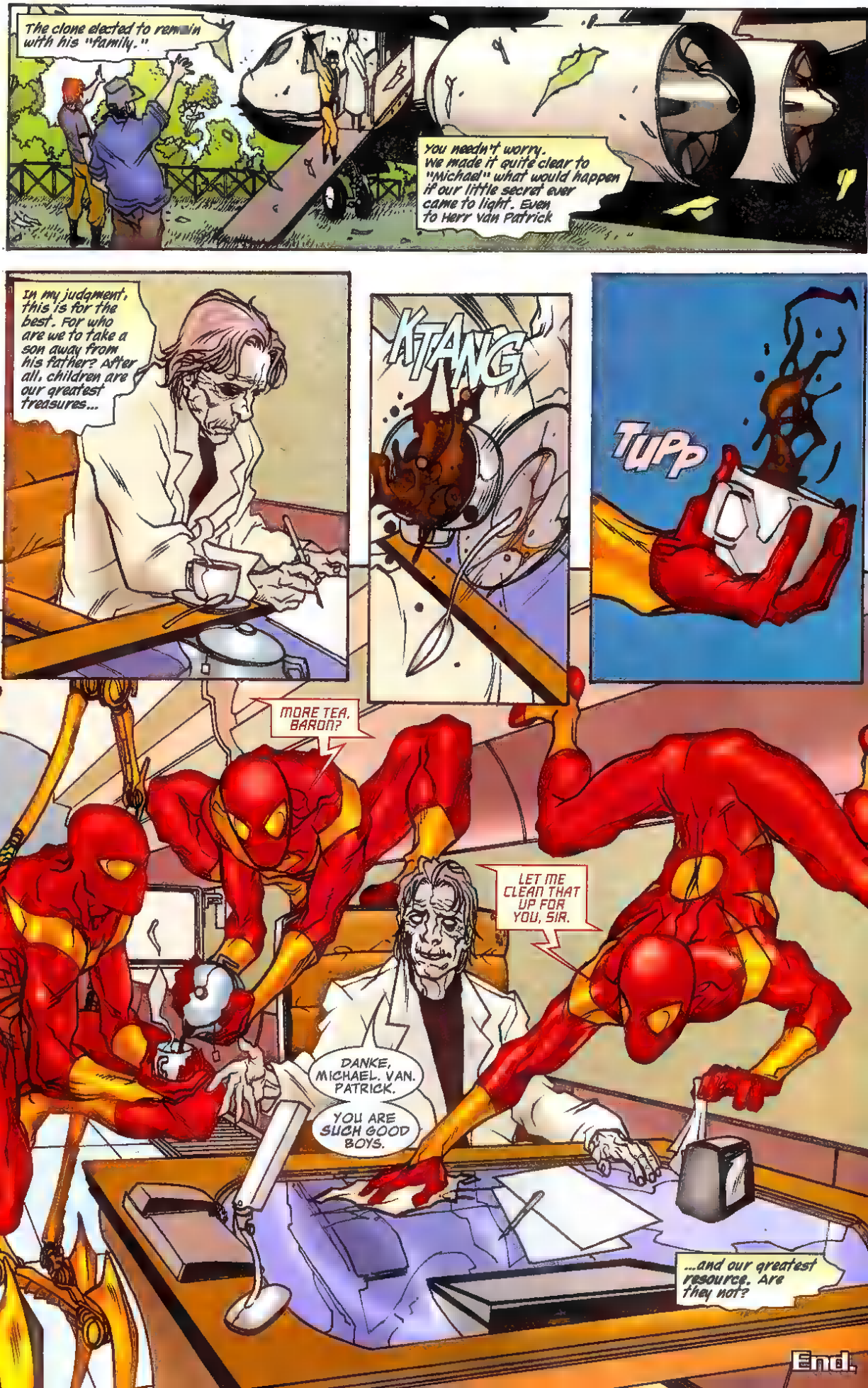
HEY, KID, SHUT UP! I'M TRYING TO CONCENTRATE HERE.
COME VITH ME, YOUNG MAN, AND ALL SHALL BE REVEALED.
THANKS TO HERR TASKMASTER, UND TELEMETRY CIRCUITS IN HIS SUIT, ALL OF MVP'S SKILLS HAVE BEEN PROGRAMMED INTO...
...THESE CLONES. YOU SEE, YOU ARE ALL THAT MICHAEL VAN PATRICK VAS...
...UND MORE.
OKAY... START RUNNING THE SPIDER-MAN FOOTAGE.
WAIT. I'M A... CLONE?
I DON'T FEEL LIKE A CLONE...

MAYBE IT WAS TOO SOON TO LET HIM KNOW THAT--
VAS? EVERYVUN SAYS "CLONE" AS IF IT IS A BAD THING.
SOME OF MY DEAREST FRIENDS HAFF BEEN CLONES.
WE...HAVE HAD SOME PROBLEMS WITH CLONING IN THE PAST. BUT THAT'S [redacted] WITH NON-HUMAN OR ALTERED HUMAN SUBJECTS.
YOU, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE PERFECTLY HUMAN.
JA... ANNOYINGLY SO.
YOU'RE THE ULTIMATE SOLDIER... THE OPTIMUM HUMAN.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HOW AM I LIKE THIS... AND WHY?
THAT, MY DEAR KIND, IS PRECISELY VHAT VE INTEND TO FIND OUT. VITH YOUR HELP, OF COURSE.
I...I DON'T... THIS IS TOO WEIRD. I JUST WANT TO GO HOME.
UND SO YOU VILL, JÜENGLING.
UND SO YOU VILL.
Liberty, Kentucky.
Van Patrick Farm
"Home of the Finest Organic Food in America"
-Produce Monthly Journal
5 MILES. RIGHT AT THE SECOND EXIT

IT--IT LOOKS LIKE HOME, BUT IT'S NOT.
IT'S HIS HOME.
MY HOME'S BACK WHERE WE CAME FROM, RIGHT?
INSIDE SOME TUBE.
HAAAHAHAHA!
OH, MY. HAFF YOU EVER READ THIS? THIS "BOYS FROM BRAZIL"?
IT'S PRICELESS, I TELL YOU-- PRICELESS!
The Van Patrick Farm.
MIKE? THAT YOU?
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
SORRY FOR NOT CALLING, MR. VAN PATRICK, BUT I'M SURE YOU CAN APPRECIATE OUR SECURITY PRECAUTIONS.
WE'VE BROUGHT YOUR SON BACK TO YOU, SIR. WE'VE HAD TO WASH HIM OUT OF OUR PROGRAM...
...IT TURNS OUT HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY SUPERHUMAN POWERS.

IF I RECALL, MY BOY AND I WERE PERFECTLY CLEAR ABOUT THAT.
QUITE HONESTLY, SIR, WE DIDN'T BELIEVE YOU. MICHAEL IS AN OPTIMUM HUMAN. WE JUST DIDN'T THINK SUCH A THING WAS POSSIBLE WITHOUT, WELL...
HOW DID YOU DO IT, HERR VAN PATRICK?
SIMPLE. THIS IS DR. ABRAHAM ERSKINE... MY GRANDFATHER. MICHAEL'S GREAT-GRANDFATHER.
HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUPER-SOLDIER EXPERIMENT THAT CREATED CAPTAIN AMERICA... YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH IT?
JA... QUITE FAMILIAR. ONE UFF MY FRIENDS VAS THERE, IN FACT...
HIS NAME VAS HEINZ
[redacted] HAD A LOVELY SINGING VOICE. UND HE BUILT THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MODEL SHIPS...
MY APOLOGIES. YOU VERE SAYING?


GRANDDAD LEFT ME YEARS OF HIS RESEARCH. FINDINGS THE GOVERNMENT DIDN'T THINK WERE WORTH BOTHERING WITH, OR EVEN CLASSIFYING AS SECRET.
IT WAS ALL ABOUT HOW TO GROW, PREPARE AND SERVE THE HEALTHIEST, MOST WHOLESOME FOODS.
IT ALSO OUTLINED AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM OF ISOMETRIC EXERCISES HE'D COME UP WITH, DESIGNED TO CHALLENGE THE HUMAN BODY LIKE NEVER BEFORE.
WAIT. ALL THIS TIME, THE SECRET TO MAKING A TRUE SUPER-SOLDIER...
...IS PROPER DIET UND REGULAR EXERCISE?
HARDLY. THIS IS A REVOLUTIONARY DIET! AND THE ULTIMATE EXERCISE REGIMEN!
THE GOVERNMENT WANTED A QUICK FIX. AND IT JUST DOESN'T WORK THAT WAY. THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS IS A LIFETIME OF DISCIPLINE AND HARD WORK.
AFTER ALL... YOU CAN'T EXPECT TO GROW A BODY LIKE THIS OVERNIGHT!
ACTUALLY--
BARON!


The clone elected to remain with his "family."
You needn't worry. We made it quite clear to "Michael" what would happen if our little secret ever came to light. Even to Herr Van Patrick
In my judgment, this is for the best. For who are we to take a son away from his father? After all, children are our greatest treasures...
KTANG
TUPP
MORE TEA, BARON?
LET ME CLEAN THAT UP FOR YOU, SIR.
DANKE, MICHAEL. VAN. PATRICK.
YOU ARE SUCH GOOD BOYS.
...and our greatest resource. Are they not?
End.

Camp Hammond.
...THE REVOLUTIONARY REPORTING IN AS ORDERED, SIR. THIS LINE IS CONFIRMED SECURE.
PROCEED, REVOLUTIONARY. I UNDERSTAND YOU'VE HAD AN EVENTFUL DAY.
THAT'S AFFIRMATIVE, SIR. PHILADELPHIA ISN'T EXACTLY A HOTBED OF SUPERHUMAN ACTIVITY. SO OUR DUTIES HAVE BEEN MOSTLY RESCUE AND RELIEF... UNTIL NOW.
IT SEEMS EVEN TERRORISTS ARE OUTSOURCING THESE DAYS. WE LEARNED HYDRA WAS SUPPLYING MONEY AND WEAPONS TO A RADICAL GROUP CALLED ULTIMATUM...
...LED BY A NEW FLAG-SMASHER.
FALL BACK! IT'S NO USE! THEY'RE TOO HEAVILY ARMORED!
BLAM BLAM
GOOD WORK, MEN! TODAY WE STRIKE AT THE HEART OF AMERICA ITSELF!
KILLING CIVILIANS IS USELESS. THEY'LL JUST BREED MORE IN THEIR TRAILER PARKS AND GHETTOS. BUT OUR ACTIONS WILL BE FATAL TO AMERICA'S VERY SOUL--
--WHEN I DESTROY THE SYMBOL OF THEIR SO-CALLED FREEDOM!
KREESH
THE LIBERTY BELL...HAH! TRUE LIBERTY WILL ONLY COME WHEN AMERICA FALLS...
...AND NOW I STRIKE THE BLOW THAT SOUNDS THE DEATH-KNELL OF THE AMERICAN DREAM!

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, DIRTBAG! LIBERTY WILL NEVER DIE...
...AS LONG AS THE LIBERTEENS LIVE!
THE LIBERTEENS IN
"STATE OF READINESS"
BLUE EAGLE
MS. AMERICA
THE REVOLUTIONARY
ICEBERG
WHIZ KID
HOPE
2-D

THE... "LIBERTEENS?"
A TIP OF THE HAT TO THE LIBERTY LEGION. WORLD WAR II HEROES WHO INSPIRED US...
...BY PROTECTING AMERICA FROM THE LIKES OF YOU!
SPROING
NOT SO TOUGH WHEN YOU'RE FIGHTING SOMEONE WITH EQUAL FIREPOWER, HUH? RELAX, I'M JUST SHOOTING TO DISABLE.
LUCKY FOR YOU THOSE FREEDOMS YOU'RE TRYING TO TEAR DOWN APPLY TO EVERYONE--EVEN TERRORIST SCUM!
UM... ACTUALLY, BLUE EAGLE, I'M NOT SURE THEY DO APPLY TO TERRORISTS THESE DAYS.
BUT JUST TO BE ON THE SAFE SIDE, I'LL CUSHION THEIR FALL...
...AND TIE 'EM UP NICE FOR THE COPS. SORRY ABOUT YOUR ARM, 2-D, BUT IT WAS ALL I COULD FIND.
HEY, IT'S OKAY, WHIZ KID. AS LONG AS NO ONE ELSE WAS ARMED IN THE PROCESS.

OUCH! OKAY, NEW RULE: NO MORE WITTY BANTER FROM THE SMART KID.
HOPE, ICEBERG--YOU GUYS OKAY?
COOL AS ICE CREAM, BUD. IF THESE LOSERS HAVE ANYTHING THAT CAN HURT US, I AIN'T SEEN IT YET.
THAT'S IT, YOU IDIOTS-- SHOW OFF FOR THE CAMERAS WHILE I MAKE MY ESCAPE...
GOING SOMEWHERE?
YES.
THROUGH YOU.
KRCHH
WHOOPS! GUESS THAT WASN'T MADE IN AMERICA.
UNLUCKY FOR YOU...

...THIS FIST IS 100% GRADE U.S.A.!
KA-WHAM!
...SO THANKS TO THE LIBERTEENS, NOT A SINGLE LIFE WAS LOST...AND THE LIBERTY BELL ISN'T SPORTING ANY NEW CRACKS.
IT LOOKS LIKE PENNSYLVANIA'S VERY OWN CHAPTER OF THE INITIATIVE IS UP AND RUNNING--AND IF YOU ASK THIS REPORTER, THEY'RE HEROES THE WHOLE NATION CAN BE PROUD OF!
Liberty's Lair, Headquarters Of The Liberteens.
WILL YOU GUYS KEEP IT DOWN? I'VE GOT TO REPORT TO INITIATIVE HQ, AND I CAN HEAR YOUR DRUNKEN ANTICS ALL THE WAY BACK IN THE MONITOR ROOM!
THE LAST THING WE NEED IS TO GET BOOTED OUT OF THE PROGRAM FOR MORAL TURPITUDE, LIKE THOSE GUYS ON THE CALIFORNIA TEAM.
THEN SHUT THE DOOR! YOU CAN SIGN ALL THE ABSTINENCE PLEDGES YOU WANT, REVOLUTIONARY...
...BUT WE COULD ALL DIE TOMORROW. SO YOU CAN BET YOUR TIGHT LITTLE BUTT I'M GONNA PARTY EVERY NIGHT LIKE IT'S MY LAST.

...SO AS YOU CAN SEE, SIR, EVERYTHING IS GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN. PENNSYLVANIA IS A ROUSING SUCCESS.
AMERICA COULDN'T BE HAPPIER WITH THE FIFTY STATE INITIATIVE.
AND AS LONG AS YOU CAN KEEP UP YOUR END AT CAMP HAMMOND...
...AND PRODUCE ENOUGH TEAMS FOR FULL NATIONWIDE COVERAGE...
AGREED.
IT WON'T BE LONG UNTIL WE HAVE...
...A SKRULL IN EVERY STATE!
THE END...?